

# Executive Director Report

small hands,  
BIG RESULTS




KAREN SCOTT  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## A Message from the ED



 On June 28th of this year, I had an opportunity to participate in a Poverty Simulation at Chaffey High School in Ontario. This workshop was conducted by Catholic Charities, a non-profit, community-based organization that exists to provide essential social services that increase the stability, health, and safety of low-income families and those in crisis, regardless of religious affiliation, serving all people in

San Bernardino and Riverside County.

Through this simulation, I was struck not only with a heightened awareness of the struggles at least 30% of Americans experience in today's economy but also what an insurmountable affect this may have on our children, especially our prenatal to age 5 population.

Although the breadth and objectives of First 5 funded programs were not designed nor intended to be based solely on economic need, our evaluation data tells us that the family income of many of our

program participants falls at or below the Federal poverty level. This struck a chord – how sensitive are we, as funders of services, that what is provided for truly supports and promotes the health and well-being of our children, despite the other circumstances regarding their family situations? And as providers of services, how sensitive are we to the challenges that families experience in accessing needed services to ensure the best outcomes for their children? To this end and in an effort to better serve our communities, First 5 San Bernardino is offering an opportunity for First 5 funded Family Resource Centers and other selected providers to participate in a Poverty Simulation in January 2013. Space permitting, participation may be opened up to others. If you are interested, please frequently check our website at [www.first5sanbernardino.org](http://www.first5sanbernardino.org) for more information.

The following is a reprint of an October 4<sup>th</sup> story about the Poverty Simulation I attended. The article is written by Krissy Clark, Senior Reporter on the Wealth and Poverty desk, for the publication: Marketplace, an American Public Media, generously supported by the Ford Foundation.

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October Edition  
**2012**

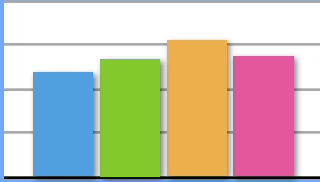


## Updates

### Fiscal Update

F5SB received the monthly revenue from Prop 10 funds in the amount of \$1,783,217.06 for March, 2012. This revenue funds First 5 San Bernardino programs and services.

2,250,000  
1,875,000  
1,500,000  
1,125,000  
750,000



Prop 10 Funds

■ Feb - \$1,649,779

■ March - \$1,783,217

■ April - \$1,925,921

■ May - \$1,803,374

### Children's Health

IEHP Coverage for June 2012= 394 premiums paid by First 5 San Bernardino for a total of \$38,002.30

### Calendar of Events

All events and their information are listed on our calendar at [www.first5sanbernardino.org](http://www.first5sanbernardino.org)

## We Read for the Record!



Over **2,600** books were donated from **First 5 San Bernardino** to agencies from **Barstow to Chino** for **Jumpstart's**

**Read for the Record** campaign! Preschool Classes, Libraries and Community Programs hosted reading sessions and activities to bring awareness to early reading with the rest of the nation on October 4th, 2012.

## First 5 San Bernardino 2012 Literacy Campaign

### Reading Railroad Gets Rolling in the High Desert

"A Busy Day" - Volunteer students host a reading circle at All Aboard the Reading Railroad in the High Desert.



The High Desert community joined First 5 San Bernardino at the Victor Valley Museum on Saturday, October 6th, 2012 for "All Aboard the Reading Railroad", enjoying an appearance by Cat In the Hat, balloon art, face painting, arts & craft activities and free museum admission. Parents also received information on school programs, early reading tools, and resources with local agencies in the area.

Free backpacks filled with school supplies and healthy snacks will be provided along with FREE entrance into the San Bernardino County Museum for our next "All Aboard The Reading Railroad" event, located at the San Bernardino County Museum in the City of Redlands. Join us on November 3rd, 2012 from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Our Literacy contest "Read Early, Read Aloud" will take place during literacy month in November. First 5 is asking families to snap a photo of their kids during story time and explain why that moment is special. Winners will receive a backpack filled with school supplies.



## All Aboard the Reading Railroad!

San Bernardino County Museum

2024 Orange Tree Lane, Redlands, CA 92374

November 3rd, 2012 | 9:00am-2:00pm

**FREE** Museum Admission, Games, Prizes, Activities, Reading Tips & More for Families with Children 5 & Under!

(909) 386-7706 [www.first5sanbernardino.org](http://www.first5sanbernardino.org)





## Family Service Association opens in Yucca Valley!



On Wednesday, October 3rd, 2012, Family Service Association hosted their grand opening event in the city of Yucca Valley. The new Center for Family & Community Services is the first in the area to host space for parenting education classes, one-on-one sessions, a resource hub, and a Cat In the Hat themed children's room! For more information about Family Service Association, visit [www.fsaca.org](http://www.fsaca.org).

## Kids Come First Hosts Community Celebration

Kids Come First hosted a Community Celebration on October 10th, 2012 honoring staff, volunteers, and supporters with special guests Senator Gloria Negrete McLeod, 32nd District and Assemblymember Norma J. Torres, 61st District. Executive Director Beverly Speak reported the agency is "Movin' On Up!" and making an impact in the West End Community. For more information on Kids Come First visit [www.kidscomefirst4health.org](http://www.kidscomefirst4health.org).



# Fourth Annual State of First 5 Address

## Making A Difference

**January 3, 2013, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.**  
**California State University San Bernardino**  
**Santos Manuel Student Union Center**  
**5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407**  
**Register FREE before December 14th**  
**Visit <https://first5sanbernardino.wufoo.com/forms/state-of-first-5-address-2013-registration/>**

## A Message from the ED *(continued from Front Page)*

### **Pretending to be poor can change your perspective** By Krissy Clark

Poverty simulation exercises confront participants with empty wallets, tough choices, and a better understanding of low-income people. In America, we spend a lot of time imagining what it would like to be rich. Reality TV shows set in Beverly Hills, celebrity red-carpet stuff. Imagining what it's like to be poor, however, is not such a national pastime. Understandable – it's not the stuff of escapist fantasies. But given that the number of Americans living in poverty has been growing, it's worth thinking about. One approach? You could go to a [Poverty Simulation](#).

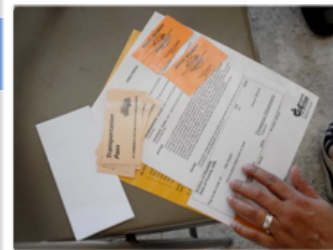
Wait...a *Poverty Simulation*? Yes. These are half-day workshops, often sponsored by local charities, to help middle class folks get a better sense of what daily life is like on the edge. The

workshops are usually geared toward people who work with low-income families on a regular basis – social workers, teachers, law enforcement, customer service workers at hospitals and utility companies.

When I first heard about the concept, three questions crossed my mind.

1. Sounds well-intentioned, but what happened to good old-fashioned empathy?
2. Can you really simulate hunger pangs?
3. I've gotta see this.

And that's how I found myself recently early one morning in a linoleum-tiled high-school auditorium in San Bernardino County, Calif. This is a county which happens to have one of the fastest growing poverty rates in America. But the 80 people standing with me in this auditorium are not poor. They're just pretending to be.



Participants were given a packet that included social security cards, assets like cameras or refrigerators and transportation options. Jolie Puidokas/Marketplace

### **The Ground Rules of Simulating Poverty**

Before the simulation gets started, Mike Shackel with [Catholic Charities](#), one of the simulation's organizers, runs through a few ground rules. The first rule of Poverty Simulation: Remember to Pay Your Bills. Also remember to eat, and to get to school or work on time. Most importantly,

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remember that the poverty simulation is not a game. "There are plenty of families all across the United States that are facing situations exactly like the ones you are reading about, or worse," Shackel tells the group as volunteers hand them packets with their new temporary identities.

A serious-looking guy in a shirt and tie opens his packet. In real life, he's James Locurto, the deputy director of the [San Bernardino Transitional Assistance Department](#), which administers food stamps and welfare. I would have assumed Locurto already knew enough about poverty. "But I don't have any real sense of what the vast majority of people living in poverty actually experience," he says. So, today James Locurto will become Jack Jolly. Jack Jolly is 25 years old and recently released from jail. He works in the cafeteria of a company called "General Employer" and makes about \$500 a month after taxes and child support. He lives in a trailer with his girlfriend Joyce and her baby. Over the course of the next pretend month, which has been compressed into an hour for the purposes of the poverty simulation, Jack Jolly's mission is to go to pretend work, get pretend paid, and find a way to pretend ends meet for his family.

### Week One: Cautious Optimism

A bell chimes to signal the start of Week One, and people zigzag around the room to different folding tables manned by volunteers. These are pretend shops and agencies you might run in to if you were poor: A payday loan company. A discount supermarket. Big Dave's Pawn Shop.

James Locurto is cautiously optimistic about his alter ego, Jack Jolly's, prospects. Yes, he acknowledges, "it absolutely looks like we're underwater. Our expenses outweigh what we're bringing in." But he's smart. He can figure this out. He tells his pretend girlfriend, Joyce, that he's off to work "and then I'll be back and we can discuss our finances further, see where we're short and where we can make up that need."

Meanwhile, over at the "Quick Cash" Pay Day loan company, a woman is discovering life without a bank account. She tries to cash a check, and balks when she's told she'll be charged 10 percent. But she needs to pay her utility bills.

### Week Two: Tough Choices

It's been a rough pretend week for Locurto, aka Jack Jolly. Someone had just handed him a "Luck of the Draw" card that said a collection agency was on his case. "I got a visit from a tow truck company over the weekend demanding \$100 payment or they're going to repossess the vehicle, which I need to get to work," he says, explaining his bind. He can't get the money without his car, but he can't keep his car without money.

But he has an idea. His pretend girlfriend, Joyce, receives some cash assistance every month from a government welfare program, through her Electronic Benefits Transfer card. So Locurto (aka Jolly) asks her if he can borrow it, to take out some money for his car payment. His girlfriend agrees, and hands him her EBT card. I watch him take his girlfriend's electronic benefits, or EBT card. And something occurs to me. "Are you allowed to do that?" I ask him. "Borrow someone else's EBT card?" He stops, and looks embarrassed. "I don't believe you are," he says, realizing he was about to accidentally commit

welfare fraud. "No. You're not allowed to." And he should know, since, in real life he's the guy who enforces the welfare rules for San Bernardino County. But for a moment, in the midst of trying to stretch a tight budget – even a simulated tight budget – Locurto says he lost track. All that mattered was "just trying to scramble to get things done, to meet the family's needs," he explains.

### Week Three: 'A Better Understanding'

By week three, all these well-dressed professionals who had come to simulate poverty were looking beat down. People complain about the endless forms and the endless waiting. "I feel like I'm at Best Buy on the day after Thanksgiving," says one participant standing in a long line at the simulated office for social services.

An exhausted looking woman named Francine Estrada is holding a doll in one hand – her simulated daughter. She's playing the role of a 20-year-old single mother. In real life, Estrada works in the District Attorney's office as a victims' advocate – mostly for low-income women who've suffered domestic abuse. "I've already gotten a better understanding of what my clients go through," Estrada says. "There's not always gratitude coming from the client to us. It does help me understand why. Not only are they dealing with traumatic events, they're dealing with poverty."



Some participants were given babies to care for. As is the case outside the simulation, children presented a host of complications for the people trying to get by. Jolie Puidokas/Marketplace

### Week Four: Not Just Simulated Poverty

Participants are trying to pick up their paychecks over at "General Employer," the pretend company where they all work. Jack Jolly, aka James Locurto, is told by a volunteer, playing the role of his pretend boss, that since he showed up at work late, he doesn't get paid. Locurto's voice rises. "Not a single paystub. Even though I reported? I mean you guys can write me up later!" he tells his pretend boss, looking genuinely annoyed. But she is unbending. "You didn't work," she says. "If you didn't work seven minutes, I can't put you down as having worked!"

At this point, another simulation participant who's watching the argument jumps in. She thinks the pretend boss is being unrealistically harsh. "That wouldn't really happen!" she says. The pretend boss turns to her. "But in life that's exactly what happens!" she says. The pretend boss is, in real life, a woman named Marianella Medina. She explains that she has gone through more than just simulated poverty. She lost her job

at a hospital a few years ago and got a traffic ticket she couldn't pay. Things spiraled.

"From one day to the other, when they started going downhill, it just sloped," Medina says. Since then she's had to turn to charities to stay afloat. She remembers a day when she got lost on her way to a food pantry, and was turned away because she showed up two minutes after it had closed. "Two minutes! Now honestly, they coulda let me in," she says. "But I guess the person on the other side didn't think it was important." Medina says part of why she volunteered to work at the simulation was to be "the person on the other side" for a day. To teach others a lesson. But she says, in her simulated role as the boss of a bunch of simulated poor people. She's realized something herself. "You hear so many hard stories that after a while you don't know which ones are true, which ones are a little fabricated. And in order for your own sanity, you don't make eye contact. You look at their paper work. You kind of like look through – right through – people," she says.

### Stand Up if You Came Out Ahead

The final bell rings, and the simulated month of poverty is over. Jack Jolly, aka James Locurto, assesses his situation. His car got repossessed. He didn't get paid for work because he'd been late. He almost accidentally committed welfare fraud. At least he paid his rent. "It's humbling," Locurto says. Shackel, the Poverty Simulation organizer, asks everyone to circle up and compare notes. "Stand up, if you think you came out ahead," he says. Only a few people stand. But there was a rumor that some of them had raided the coffee station and started dealing drug "sugar packets." "So go ahead and sit down now if you conducted any illegal activities," Shackel says. And only a few are left standing. Overall, three families had gotten evicted, multiple people were in jail for traffic tickets they couldn't pay, and I'd seen at least two people break down in tears. And this was just simulated poverty. But I wondered if any of this would actually make a difference in the real world.

### Back to the Real World

"I guarantee you, everybody who's driving home or back to their jobs right now, they're really thinking," Ken Sawa, the executive director of Catholic Charities San Bernardino, told me after the Poverty Simulation was over. As proof, he put me in touch with Frank Hyming, who owns a property management company near San Bernardino. A third of his tenants are low-income. Hyming went to a poverty simulation a few months ago. "As the simulation was wrapping up," he remembers, "I turned to my wife and I said 'We've got to do something to help.'" What he did wasn't dramatic. During the simulation, he realized how hard it can be to round up a big chunk of money on a tight budget. So he changed his policy on paying security deposits. Now tenants can pay over a few months, rather than all upfront. After I spoke with Hyming, I stopped by one of his properties, where I ran in to Heather Keku, a new tenant who was coming back from the store with her toddler. Keku works a low-wage job as a housekeeper at Disneyland Hotel, and I asked whether the new security deposit policy had helped. "With diapers and food and all that, it helped a lot," she says. I tell her it came out of something called a "Poverty Simulation," that her landlord had gone to. I feel strange saying this in front of her. But she is not fazed. "Yeah," she smiles. "It helps to look on the other side of things." Then she scoops up her daughter, and goes up to her apartment.